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SUBJECT: Entry-Level Initiative to Celebrate African-American History Month Plays Key Role in Outreach to Jordan

¶1. (U) SUMMARY: In celebration of African-American History Month, Embassy Amman scheduled a series of events for Jordanian and American audiences. The Embassy honored African-Americans through art exhibitions, film showings, discussion, concerts, and a formal ball. Each event shared an aspect of African-American culture and history while emphasizing America's diversity. Entry-level staff members designed the month's programs and recruited a diverse committee of staff members from different agencies, locally employed staff, and eligible family members. Using volunteers in the Embassy community and the Community Liaison Office (CLO), African-American History Month programs reached over 800 people in Jordan. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (U) Programs: To celebrate African-American History Month, Embassy Amman scheduled a selection of performing and visual arts, discussions, and social interactions.

¶3. (U) Poster Exhibits: The Embassy displayed three poster exhibits throughout the American Club and chancery buildings. Two of the poster exhibits were part of the State Department's African-American History Month program featuring Rosa Parks, as well as Historically Black Colleges and Universities and sororities and fraternities. The two American Corners at the University of Jordan and Hashemiya University also displayed these two paper shows. An entry-level professional designed the third poster exhibit, which highlighted prominent African-American figures. Several LES members commented this was their first exposure to so much information on African-American history.

¶4. (U) Art Exhibit: The Embassy also displayed African-American art in the American Club. The exhibit featured African-American artists and African-American foci from the personal collections of Americans in the Embassy community. All art was accompanied by the name of the donor and an explanation of the importance of the artwork to them.

¶5. (U) Film Showing of Ray: American Embassy employees viewed the 2004 Academy Award winner "Ray." The content provided an educational background on the life of Ray Charles and the growth and influence of African-Americans in music and pop culture. The CLO provided free popcorn, sodas, and sweets drawing in a larger crowd.

¶6. (U) Film Showing and Discussion of Malcolm X: The Ambassador hosted an educational showing and discussion of Spike Lee's 1992 film "Malcolm X" at the EMR. Approximately twenty Jordanian undergraduate and graduate students participated in the event. The Public Affairs Officer facilitated the discussion, which started with the topic of Islam in the African-American community. The students openly shared their views on the use of peaceful protest versus the use of violence in America's Civil Rights Movement. They then connected recent events in the Middle East, including movements in Iraq and the Palestinian territories for democracy and civil rights, with events and progress in African-American history. Some students compared the use of religion in politics in the African-American community with the Middle East. The open discussion allowed the Jordanian students to freely voice their opinions not only about African-American history, but also about their own history and conditions in the region.

¶7. (U) Hip-hop Performance by Opus Akoben: Described as a "DC bred, internationally fed hip-hop fusion band," Opus Akoben performed its blend of hip-hop, rock, go-go, reggae, and Afro-Brazilian beats at three different venues in Jordan. Public Affairs arranged for the group to visit Jordan as part of ECA's Rhythm Roads programs. Opus Akoben conducted three live musical performances: at Yarmouk University in Irbid, at a popular local dance club, and at the premier cultural venue in downtown Amman, in addition to master classes with students from Yarmouk University, the University of Jordan, the Jordanian Academy for Music, and the local Haya Cultural Center in Amman. Overall, more than 550 people attended the live performances, and more than 145 students participated in the workshops. Through the African-American History Month Committee, Opus Akoben also performed at a local lounge to an enthusiastic young crowd of over 130 Jordanians.

¶8. (U) Black & White Ball: The African-American History Month celebration culminated with a formal ball. A U.S. Army colonel serving at Post served as the keynote speaker and delivered a

speech on African-Americans in the U.S. military. The Ambassador delivered remarks on the importance of diversity and volunteerism in the U.S. The event catered to 210 Jordanians and Americans, and emphasized the importance of African-American history and America's diversity.

¶9. (U) Organization: The African-American History Month Committee organized the events for the month. The committee consisted of about 25 volunteers, including officers from various agencies, eligible family members, and locally employed staff members. Entry-level professionals initiated the month-long programming and then executed the plan using the leadership and talents of members of the Embassy community. All events were self-funded through ticket sales or individual sponsorship. The CIO played a critical role providing logistical and temporary funding for many events.

¶10. (U) COMMENT: Through the series of events, the Embassy reached at least 800 people in Jordan. Many of the participants were Jordanian young adults, a targeted audience at the mission. Senior management at Post supported and recognized the efforts of all volunteers who helped make it a successful month, and note that the month's program was entirely an entry-level personnel initiative. END COMMENT.

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